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B E E R.

ALL human emotions are mixed—joy with sorrow, pleasure with pain, regret with hope ; the soul, thirsting for a draught of unalloyed happiness, gets nothing but half-and-half, and therefore it is with mingled feelings of trustfulness and fear, that I contemplate the great question of Beer. When the Chancellor of the Exchequer facilitated the introduction of French wines, I trembled for my country ; but she has withstood the ordeal, and her sinews will not be unstrung, or her backbone weakened, by the substitution of thin Bordeaux for honest malt and hops yet a while. It is well to accommodate one's self to the habits of the country in which one is a sojourner, and therefore wine is not a bad drink for a traveller, *faute de Meux* ; but that a nation watered by malt liquor should desert its native element for such a thin and bloodless tap as *vin ordinaire*, at one shilling the bottle, would be as perverse a choosing of the evil, and eschewing the good, as if the Muses were to turn up their noses at the Helicon springs, and have the Styx laid on to Parnassus for their own private drinking. Yes, England has escaped this second blow aimed at her vitals by the misguided statesman who loves, and, for the most part, serves her so well ; he led John Bull to the vinegar-cruet, but he could not make him drink. It is well, the fall of the British empire is delayed, but, alas ! not, I fear, entirely averted, for the first thrust went home, and the weapon was barbed, and stuck. The future doom of England was sealed when the first packet of Tea was landed on her shores. Before the introduction of that fatal plant, English ladies drank beer for breakfast ! Think of that, and weep, patriot.

Alas ! the tea-wave has flowed over us, and the consequence is that English ladies have become subject to alloverishness and feelings of sinking, and a tendency never to be well, even when there is nothing particularly the matter with them. They object to taking exercise, and are thoroughly knocked up by a four-mile walk. How, then, are their great-grandsons to maintain our Indian empire, keep the world generally in order, supply the market with blubber, and discover the sources of Niles ? What is the use of volunteer movements, colonial cricket-matches, and the publishing of works like *Tom Brown*, if the women of England decline to do their part ? I have no wish to be rude or over-warm, but a short

time ago I heard some ladies objecting to certain ruddy, healthy, boisterous children as having a vulgar appearance ; they had rather see their little ones look delicate, interesting, and genteel ! I feel sure that those ladies never drank beer, even at lunch or dinner ; the tea had entered into their souls.

Cannot something be done ? Are there no spirited and patriotic ladies to get up a Female Muscular Movement ? Races with Amazon riders ; international croquet-matches ; an annual archery-meeting on the Wimbledon scale ; anything to promote habits of healthy exercise ; the consumption of beer would follow as a matter of course, and England would be saved. I am happy to say, however, that girls are taking to the water as ducks should, and from Richmond to Windsor you may see them handling the oar with much grace and dexterity, on any fine summer evening. I have even seen of late years four oars manned—I mean womaned—entirely by ladies, who were dressed in a regular boating uniform, and my heart has bounded with joy and hope. Would it be going too far to suggest a feminine regatta ? Another cheering consideration is, that beer is now generally sold at pastry-cooks', so that ladies who are out shopping, and lunch abroad, are no longer forced to quench their thirst with tea, ginger-pop, a medicated nastiness without a drop of lemon-juice in it called lemonade, or depressing soda-water, but can draw health, strength, and vigour from the fountain of British prosperity.

But, alas ! Beer itself has degenerated. The introduction of Pale Ale has proved widely detrimental to the soundness and excellence of the national tap. I do not mean to deny that the bitter beer of Bass, Allsopp, Usher, Aitchison, and others, is a wholesome, invigorating drink ; but I affirm that the taste created by them for the flavour of hops, has been taken fearful advantage of by thousands of designing brewers and publicans, who imitate the flavour by poisoning the honest malt with all sorts of medicaments, which create thirst, disorder the stomach, and make the head ache ; while there is so little demand for the genuine old or mild ale of one's youth, that I fear me the secret of brewing it is being forgotten. A few years back, I was travelling about Wales, a land in which, from many a former experience, I thought that I was at least safe to get a good glass of ale ; but, alas ! it was in vain that I visited each well-remembered tap. The broad lake spread before the house,

the pine-clad mountain rose behind it, and the harper twanged *Jenny Jones* in the hall as of yore; but the beer that I remembered had fled, and the cellars were filled with a nasty mixture of malt and quassia, which clung so to the palate, that the hungry traveller could not tell whether he were eating trout or barbel. London is a happy exception to the rest of Great Britain in this respect, as the cockney still clings to his stout and porter, and this description of malt liquor has in nowise degenerated. And yet the country visitant who has perchance taken a homely ante-theatrical chop at the Cock or the Cheshire Cheese, or a post-theatrical potato at Evans's, and has quaffed the nourishing stout, the refreshing porter, or that happy combination of the two termed 'Cooper,' at either of those establishments, and who naturally wishes that he himself, his wife, and his family, should be daily nourished and comforted by the like elixir, is liable to disappointment, for black beer requires a rapid draught; and if his household be not large enough, or thirsty enough, to consume the eighteen-gallon cask in a fortnight or three weeks, the drink, which was at first so delicious, will become flat and almost disagreeable to the taste.

The universities of Oxford and Cambridge, also, are honourable exceptions to the fearfully general rule which I heard enunciated by a wise and experienced omnibus-driver the other day, 'Beer is not what it used to was.' Those seminaries of sound ale and religious knowledge have but coquettled with the bitter heresy, and it is a happy thought for parents, whose sons are completing their education on the banks of the Isis or the Cam, that while their minds are being stored with learning, their bodily powers are expanding, and their constitutions strengthening under the genial influence of good, wholesome, unadulterated essence of malt and hops. My memory, as in private duty bound, reverts with a pleasing melancholy to the ale of Trinity College, Cambridge, in particular—to the ordinary ale, not the Audit, which is too exquisite for every-day drinking, and ought rather to be reserved for festive occasions. And yet, I have heard from good, nay, I should say the very best authority, that there is at a certain college in Oxford, I think Merton or Balliol, an ale superior even to Trinity Audit in strength and flavour. I should almost fear, though, that it must be a slightly bilious beverage, not to mention the probability of its possessing inebriating qualities of no common order. I believe that the excellence of university beer is mainly owing to certain wise provisions made by far-seeing founders, who felt the national importance of preserving the art of brewing to future generations, and who introduced clauses into the leases of farms belonging to different colleges binding the holders thereof to furnish so much barley or malt to the commonwealth whose tenants they were. And yet there are no statutes to these men!

All things may be abused, and even beer may be injurious when taken to excess; for instance, coal-whippers, who drink gallons a day, must, I should think, find their livers deranged occasionally; and draymen, who take less exercise than coal-whippers, and who swallow, perhaps not so much, but a great deal of malt liquor in the course of the day, are said to be mostly in a bad state of health, strong, powerful men as they seem; and though the popular idea, that the scratch of a nail is inevitably fatal to them, is no doubt an exaggeration, I have no doubt but that their blood is often in an evil condition. But nine-tenths of the evils attributed to beer are really owing to the horrible drugs put into it by many landlords. A working-man who has to buy his glass of beer retail at the public-house, does not get a fair chance. I remember coming out of a theatre at about a quarter to eleven one night a year ago, when I wanted to catch an eleven o'clock train, and feeling thirsty, I turned with a friend into a public-house

by the way, and had a glass of beer. Only one half-pint glass apiece, on my veracity, and we were as much drugged as if we had taken a dose of laudanum. We had the utmost difficulty in keeping awake in the railway-carriage, and nearly passed the station we wanted to get out at. And the filthy taste left in the mouth, with the feverish thirst experienced when the effect had passed off, fully accounted, to my mind, for half the cases of helpless drunkenness we see in the streets. A gentleman will drink his pint or pint and a half of strong beer for dinner, besides a glass or two of sherry, and not be in the slightest degree affected by it; but what would be the condition of the poor man who swallowed a pint of that stuff myself and my friend poisoned ourselves with that night? This drugging of beer is a fearful iniquity, and one to which the brewers, the very men who ought to protect us in this matter, are often partly responsible for; for, holding as they do so many public-houses, whose landlords are prohibited from selling any other beer than their own, they might surely find some means of insuring its being sold over the counter in the same state as when it left the brewery. That it hardly ever is so, any one who is in the habit of going into sea-side lodgings in the summer and autumn, and trying to get decent beer for his meals from the various inns, will bear witness. For this and all other beer reforms, we appeal humbly to the brewers, for to offend them by parliamentary agitation, or an attempt at competition, would be highly impolitic. It is always a bad plan to shew your teeth when you cannot bite; and who is to shake the great malt monopoly? It is true that capital might be raised, foremen seduced, and the secrets of the trade discovered; but then there is the Water. It is not every spring which can be raised to the dignity of good ale or stout; and though there may be small rivulets here and there from which the country gentleman or farmer may brew a sufficient quantity for the consumption of his household, it is but rarely that suitable water is found in those floods which enable Burton, Romford, &c., to supply a thirsty world. Just think of the quantity of beer consumed annually in the sultry East; why, any one regiment in India would be able to play a winning-game at draw-the-well-dry with the rash speculator who attempted to supply it from a limited fountain. By the by, has the reader ever considered the fact, that our Indian empire is based, not upon the enterprise and genius of individuals, not upon the national tenacity and courage, not upon our command of the sea, or the overland route, all which are but coincident and auxiliary agencies, but upon ale? The French, the Dutch, the Spaniards, have all in turn established themselves in those burning climes, but the English alone have taken root and spread. Why? Because British officers, driving by a wise instinct the only method of repairing the waste by evaporation, which is constantly taking place in northern frames under that burning sun, take beer, not wine, with each other at dinner.

I think that I have made a grand discovery, which will be interesting to all true lovers of our national beverage, and that is the origin of the letters X, XX, and XXX, branded upon beer-barrels. I may, however, be in the position of the Swiss shepherd who invented a watch, and who, on repairing to Geneva, big with his discovery for measuring the winged hours, found that a far superior article was not entirely unknown to the world at large. My story, then, may not be new to the reader, or, if so, may not be the true explanation of the magic numbers, but at anyrate here it is.

A German, who had two great hobbies, travelling and wine, was accustomed, when he put up at an inn where he was satisfied in the latter respect, to write the Latin word *Est* (It is) in large letters on the mantel-piece. When he was very much pleased indeed

with his entertainment, he wrote *Est, Est*; but at a house at Montefiascone, in Italy, where there is some splendid Muscat, he wrote *Est, Est, Est*, and drank himself to death with it. Coulanges records the story, and declares that he himself saw this epitaph, which was put over the deceased toper by his servant :

*Est, Est, Est, et propter Est, Est, Est,
Dominus meus hic est.*

I appeal to any reader of *Notes and Queries*, whether there are not many more far-fetched derivations every week in that publication than that which traces XXX to *Est, Est, Est*.

As to those misguided men who would deprive their fellow-creatures of their modest and sober pint of ale, there is a song applicable to them, the sentiments of which I cannot concur with, as they are as revengeful as the words in which they are expressed are coarse. The chorus is a good one, however, and with the attempt to infuse a more amiable spirit into it, I close the subject :

For I like a drop of good beer,
I'm particular fond of beer;
And I hope we may find
Him in a better mind,
Who would rob a poor man of his beer.

OUR MAIL-PACKET SERVICE, PAST AND PRESENT.

MUCH has been written in this *Journal* and elsewhere on the Post-office, that offspring and splendid triumph of civilisation, as Lord Macaulay calls it; but the *mail-packet* system, perhaps the most gigantic branch of the entire establishment, and one which is worked at an enormous yearly cost, has seldom, if ever, been mentioned. Old Pennant said of the insignificant postal sea-service of his day, that 'it indeed giveth wings to the extension of commerce.' How far this is still true, or rather, how much more truthfully the same may be said of our present mail-packet service, the reader will have an opportunity of judging presently. To keep pace with the requirements of our trade and commerce in the distribution of intelligence throughout the globe, is no small task, but it is one which is now regularly and thoroughly accomplished. The work has to be assisted, however, by external aid. Only one foreign line of mail-packets yields a revenue to the country, the great majority being supported by large subsidies from the public exchequer.

For many years, and up to so late as 1860, the entire mail-service was under the control of the Lords of the Admiralty, and the expenses of it were paid by that department. Long previously, however, during great part of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this service was managed by the Post-office authorities, just as it is at present. Under the system of the two joint postmasters-general, one of these functionaries attended to the general postal business, and the other took charge of the packets. Some curious accounts survive of the infancy of the postal sea-service, during the former part of last century, when Sir Robert Cotton and Sir Thomas Frankland shared its management. In those sad times when war was raging, and French privateers covered every sea, our postmasters-general were anxious, though shrewd and active men. The general orders to the captains of the vessels under their control were such as, under the circumstances, they ought to be: 'You must run while you can, fight when you can no longer run, and throw the mails overboard when fighting will no longer avail.' Notwithstanding such an order, and on account of so many mails travelling short of their destination, the postmasters-general resolve to build swift packet-boats that shall escape the enemy; but

in their inexperience, they get them built so low in the water, that shortly afterwards, 'we doe find that in blowing weather they take in soe much water that the men are constantly wet through, and can noe ways goo below, being obliged to keep the hatches shut to save the vessel from sinking.' It is clear that better and stronger boats must be built, and stronger boats are built accordingly. To make up for the expense, they order that the freight of passengers shall be raised, though 'recruits and indigent persons shall still have their passage free.' It is noteworthy here that about this time no political refugee seeking an asylum in England is ever hard pressed for a fare on the continental packet-boats, but an entry is made in the agent's letter-book that so and so 'have not wherewithal to pay their charges,' and are sent on their path to liberty without further question.

Every provision is supplied by the authorities in London, and salaries and pensions of all kinds are granted; thus, in one item, a chaplain is appointed for the crew of one of the packets, with a small stipend, 'for doing their offices of births, marriage, and burial.' Pensions for wounds received in the service are granted with nice discrimination of the relative parts of the body. In a letter to their agent at Falmouth, the postmasters-general send a scale of pensions to be granted according to the kind of wound; thus: 'For every arm or leg amputated above the elbow or knee, £8 per annum; below the arm or knee, twenty nobles. Loss of the sight of one eye must be £4; of the pupil of the eye, £5; of the sight of both eyes, £12; of the pupils of both eyes, £14; and according to these rules, we consider also how much also the hurts affect the body, and make the allowances accordingly.' The duties devolving upon the chief Post-office officials seem not only to have been onerous and heavy—many of their instructions to their agents bearing dates from the middle of the night and other extraordinary hours—but curiously varied. Many of their letters are preserved among the old records in the vaults under the General Post-office, and some of them are quite sad and plaintive in their tone. 'We are concerned,' they say to one agent, 'to find the letters brought by your boat [one from the West Indies] to be so consumed by the rats that we cannot find out to whom they belong.' Another letter to their agent at Harwich is evidently disciplinary, and runs as follows:

'MR EDISBURY—The woman whose complaint we herewith send you, *having given us much trouble upon the same*, we desire you will inquire into the same, and see justice done her, believing she may have had her brandy stole from her by the sailors.—We are your affectionate friends [!].' R. C. T. F.' Fancy such a letter as the above proceeding from officialdom in the year of grace eighteen hundred and sixty-three! In another letter, we find the authorities affectionately scolding an agent because 'he had not provided a sufficiency of pork and beef for the prince' (who this pork-loving prince was, does not appear); in another, because 'he had bought powder at Falmouth that would have been so much cheaper in London.' In other cases, they act as public guardians of morality and loyalty, suspending one because 'he had stirred up a mutiny between a captain and his men, *which was unhandsome conduct in him*,' bringing one Captain Clies to trial, inasmuch as 'he had spoken words reflecting on the royal family, which the postmasters-general took particular unkind of him,' and can by no means allow; and reprimanding another captain for 'breaking open the portmanteau of a gentleman-passenger, and spoiling him of a parcel of snuff.' What with all these cares and duties, the postmasters-general of those days could scarcely have had a light time of it.

Three or four thousand pounds sufficed to pay for the entire mail-packet service of a hundred and fifty years ago. It must be remembered, however, that, if

we except a few continental mails, an occasional packet to the colonies of North America and the West Indies was all that had to be sustained. At that time, the aboriginal inhabitants of Australia and New Zealand were in undisputed possession of those enormous territories; the Dutch were then the sole targets for the arrows of the Kaffirs at the Cape; Warren Hastings and Lord Clive had not yet commenced their careers in the East; China was hermetically sealed to the outer barbarians; while the tide of emigration which has since carried Anglo-Saxon blood and Anglo-Saxon energy into every corner of the globe had not then to any extent set in. For many years past, under the control of the Admiralty, the mail-packet service of this country, traversing every known sea, to keep up a connection with those whom the exigencies of life and commerce have dispersed so widely, have cost the country something like a million pounds sterling *per annum*!

In accordance with the provisions of an act passed in the session of 1859—1860, the general control of the British packet-service was transferred (on the 1st of April 1860) to the Post-office authorities, from whom it ought never to have been taken. It was considered that the postmaster-general, under the Treasury, was the best judge of the requirements of the service, and could best set about reducing the enormous expenditure arising from contracts, which the Lords of the Admiralty, generally from political motives, had entered into. That this judgment was the correct one, three years have amply sufficed to prove. Contracts have been thrown open to public competition; and although many of the companies which had previously done certain services, re-secured them after a competition, it was found that they had only done so by engaging to do the work at a much lower figure—in one or two cases, in fact, for half the amount they had been wont to receive. Another change which the Post-office authorities have made is a radical but a necessary one, and bids fair to make the mail-packet service, at no distant date, self-supporting, so far as the mother-country is concerned. Under the new principle already applied to India and Australia, the British colonies are required to pay *half the cost* of their respective services, the English government paying the remainder. The result in some instances has been an increase in postage-rates, but we hope this will not long be considered necessary. All the packet contracts, as they fall vacant, are advertised fully by the Post-office authorities, and in sufficient time. Printed forms are issued, and intending contractors are required to fill them up; every arrangement being made to secure the efficiency of the work. Nearly all the contracts are now made terminable on twelve months' notice being given by the postmaster-general.

The total number of steam-ships employed in the mail-packet service, exclusive of tenders, &c., is, as we learn from the latest return, *ninety-six*, with an aggregate of 140,000 tons, and of 36,000 horse-power. The largest and most powerful mail-packet in the service is the Cunard paddle-wheel steam-ship *Scotia*, of 3871 tons burthen, and 1000 horse-power. It belongs to the contractors for the North American service, Messrs Cunard, Burns, and Maciver. The smallest mail-packet is one belonging to Mr Churchward of Dover, and called the *Virid*, of 300 tons, and 128 horse-power. It is doubtful, however, whether this packet is, at the moment of writing, in the service, as Mr Churchward, by a recent decision of the House of Commons, loses his contracts for the Dover and Calais, and Dover and Ostend mails, which have been given to the Belgian government.

The mail-packet contracts are divided into those of the Home, and those of the Foreign services. The most important home service is that for carrying the Irish mails, entered into by the City of Dublin Steam-packet Company. They are required to keep four

powerful steam-vessels to ply twice a day between Holyhead and Kingstown, for a yearly payment of £55,900. This contract lasts until 1865. The least important contract in the home service, if we may judge by the terms imposed, is that for the daily conveyance of mails between Greenock and Belfast, entered into by Mr Burns of Glasgow. Mr Burns undertakes to perform this service in all weathers, *free of expense*, and to pay an annual sum of one hundred pounds as penalty for general improper performance of the duty! The home contracts dwindle into insignificance before those of the foreign service. The foreign packets travel over the immense distance of three millions of statute miles each year. As the cost of the whole service is nearly a million pounds annually, the average charge per mile is 6s. 4d. The average speed of the foreign packets is ten miles an hour. The principal contracts are those for the Indian and Chinese mails, entered into by the Peninsular and Oriental Steam-navigation Company, and for which the sum of £253,000 is paid yearly. In this service, packets sail four times a month from Southampton, and other mails are met at Marseille, at the like intervals. A fleet of steamers, of not less than 1100 tons, are engaged for a system of relays established in the Mediterranean, and also between Suez and Bombay, Suez and Calcutta, and Bombay and China. The Australian mails are carried out to Ceylon in the Indian packets, when, on arrival at that point, another fleet of steamers, engaged from the same company on a supplementary contract of £134,672 a year, carry them between Point de Galle and Sydney. The West Indian are the worst paying of all the foreign mails, costing twice as much as they yield; the Royal Mail Steam-packet Company are paid the enormous sum of £270,000 a year for their conveyance. The North American mails are carried by Messrs Cunard & Co. for the sum of £176,340 a year. Eight steam-vessels are employed by this firm, leaving Liverpool once a week, and travelling also between New York and Nassau once a month. The Galway contract is now restored, and will form a supplementary service. Sir Samuel Cunard himself contracts for the Canadian mails, receiving the yearly sum of £14,700. These supplementary packets sail from Halifax, on the arrival of the Cunard steamers from Europe, to Bermuda and St Thomas, and also to Newfoundland. The Canadian contract costs less than any other on the foreign service.

The most distant point to which English mails are conveyed by the British packet-service is Auckland, New Zealand, about 15,000 statute miles from Southampton. This service is rendered by the Inter-colonial Royal Mail-packet Company, with a fleet of four strong steamers, for £22,000 annually. Of course, this company only performs the journeys between Sydney in New South Wales and Auckland in New Zealand. The nearest point from England is Calais, twenty-six miles from Dover.

Notwithstanding the extraordinary length of some of the journeys of the different mail-packets, the postmaster-general informs us, in his last Report, that except in case of accident, the packets, even when late, arrive within a few hours of their time; sometimes, within a few minutes. As examples of remarkable punctuality, which is now the rule, and not the exception, he gives several instances, from which we select the following: 'The mails for the West Indies and Central America, despatched from Southampton on the seventeenth of September, were delivered at the Danish island of St Thomas, distant more than four thousand miles, at the precise moment at which they were due. On the same voyage, the mails for Jamaica and Demerara, conveyed in each case by a separate branch-packet, were delivered within a few minutes of the time at which they were due; the mails for parts of Central America and for the Pacific were delivered at Colon,

on the eastern coast of the Isthmus of Panama, distant 5400 miles, thirty minutes after time, the packet having been detained at sea that precise period by H.M.S. *Orlando*; while the mails for Chili, after having been conveyed with others across the Isthmus of Panama, were delivered at Valparaiso, distant nearly 9000 miles from Southampton, two hours before the appointed time.'

The mail-packets employ a force, including officers, of more than eight thousand men. In addition to these, there is a staff of thirty-three naval officers—all officers of the royal navy, though maintained by the Post-office—employed upon such packets as those for the Cape and the west coast of Africa, and charged with the care and correct delivery of the mails. They are further required to do all they can to guard against delay on the voyage, and to report on all nautical questions affecting in any way the proper efficiency of the service. Other officers, besides, are fixed at different foreign stations, to direct the transfers of mails from packet to packet, or from packets to other modes of conveyance. Then, again, in growing numbers, another class of officers travel in charge of mails, such as the Indian and Australian, and on all the North American packets, who, with a number of sorters, are employed in sorting the mails *during the voyage*, in order to save time and labour in the despatch and receipt of mails at London and Liverpool respectively. There are now twenty-eight of this new class of working mail-officers, who, of course, are substituted for the old class of naval agents. On the less-important mail-packets, no naval officer is specially appointed, but the mails are taken in charge by the commander.

In past years, few casualties, comparatively, have occurred in this service. The loss of the mail-packet *Violet*, on her journey between Ostend and Dover, in 1856, will be remembered by many. One incident in that melancholy shipwreck deserves mention here, affording a gleam of rich sunshine amid a page of dry though unimportant matter. Mr Mortleman, the mail-officer in charge of the bags, on seeing that there was no chance for the packet, must have gone down into the hold, and have removed all the cases containing the mail-bags from that part of the vessel; and further, placed them so that when the ship and all in it went down, they might float—a proceeding which ultimately led to the recovery of all the bags, including a case of valuable dispatches. On another occasion, the mail-master of a Canadian packet sacrificed his life, when he might have escaped, by going below to secure the mails intrusted to him. Other cases of a similar devotion to duty have, on several occasions of exposure to imminent danger, distinguished the conduct of these public officers, proving that some of them regard the onerous duties of their position in a somewhat higher light than we find obtains in the ordinary business of life.

During the last year, however, an unprecedentedly large number of shipwrecks are on record, no less than five valuable packets having been totally lost. In the early part of the year, the *Karnak*, belonging to Messrs Cunard and Co., was wrecked in entering Nassau harbour. Shortly after, the *Lima* struck on a reef off Lagarto Island, in the South Pacific Ocean, and went down. The only loss of life occurred in the case of the *Cleopatra*, the third packet which was lost. This last-named vessel, belonging to the African Steam-ship Company, the contractors for the Cape service, was wrecked on Shebar reef, near Sierra Leone, when an officer and four Kroomen were washed from a raft and drowned, in endeavouring to reach the shore. Towards the close of 1862, the *Avon*, belonging to the contractors for the West Indian service, was wrecked at her moorings in the harbour of Colon, New Granada; and lastly, the *Colombo* (conveying the Australian mails from Sydney) shared

the same fate on Minicoy Island, four hundred miles from Ceylon. The greatest loss of correspondence was caused by the failure of the last-mentioned packet, though, from the care of the Post-office authorities, and the prompt arrangements of the contractors, the loss was not nearly so great as it might otherwise have been, if the proper appliances had not been ready to hand. The mails were rescued from their ocean-beds, and brought to London, where every effort that skill could devise was made to restore them to their original condition. They were carefully dried, in order that the addresses of the letters and newspapers might be deciphered. When dried, it was requisite that they should be handled most carefully, to prevent them crumbling to pieces; so much so, in fact, that many were unfit to travel out of London without being tied up carefully, gummed, and placed in new envelopes, and re-addressed, providing that the old address could by any means be read or obtained. Notwithstanding all the care and attention bestowed, a great number of letters remained, in the words of the Post-office people, 'in a hopeless state of pulp.' An Australian *carte de visite*, which arrived with the rescued mails from the *Colombo*, and now before us, may have been a gem of art from one of the antipodean 'temples of the sun,' but we have not now the means of judging, as a yellow bit of paper, with an indistinct outline upon it, is all that remains.

RUTH MORRISON.

IN FOUR PARTS.

PART III.—CHAPTER VII.

WITH a sudden, uneasy shiver, Ruth Morrison awoke. She felt chilled and unrefreshed, from not having undressed and gone to bed. 'Dear me! it must be morning,' she thought; 'I seem to have slept so long.' She got up quickly, and staggered to the window; it was still pitchy dark—not the faintest gleam from any quarter of the heavens—while heavy rain was falling, with a dull monotonous beat, upon the windowpanes. Dreariness inexpressible reigned within and without. 'It may be morning all the while,' said Ruth to herself, 'though it is so dark.' She tried, by feeling the hands of her watch, to learn the hour; but she had forgotten to wind it up the previous evening. 'What shall I do now?' she thought. 'Bridget might easily oversleep herself such dark mornings as these;' and she recoiled from the idea of daylight overtaking her again at Oaklands. Were she really the guilty thing that they tried to make her out, she could not have shrunk more from the notion of meeting, or holding communication with any one in the house or about the place. To get away in the early dusk, before the family were astir, was her first desire; her second, to write fully to Captain Sinclair, and demand a thorough investigation. She remembered, as she stood, dubious and shivering, in the raw bitterness of the night, that a box of matches always lay, for the servant's use, behind the clock on the mantel-piece, in the dining-room. 'If I can creep down there without being heard, I could light my candle, and find out the hour.'

She hastily put on some more of her garments, and wrapped herself in a cloak that she had left, ready for travelling in, at the foot of the bed. Feeling on the table for the candlestick, she stole softly out, standing for a moment in the lobby to listen if any one was moving in the house; and all being silent, she passed gently on down the stairs. The dining-room door was not quite closed, but ajar. She found the fire in the grate still burning, and readily lit her candle by it, without the aid of the matches. When she lifted the light to the timepiece, she found, to her astonishment, that it was but half-past one. Much disappointed by this discovery, she determined to warm herself here, at all events, being

dreadfully cold ; and she shut the door, and stirred up the smouldering coals, until they broke out into a cheerful blaze. When thoroughly heated at the rekindled fire, but feeling altogether sleepless—‘ I have a great mind,’ thought she, ‘ to stay here until the morning ; better than going back now to that cold miserable room above.’ Accordingly, she put out the candle, and placed it on a small round table in a little recess near the fireplace, and lay down upon the sofa, covering herself with the cloak. How long Ruth remained thus, losing consciousness in the gradual stealing on of sleep, she was scarcely aware. She had neither heard any one coming into the room, nor had the smallest idea that she was no longer alone, when she was suddenly roused up by hearing voices close to her. The sofa on which Ruth was lying was at one side of the room, not very far from the fireplace ; but as its upper arm ran into a shallow niche in the wall, and the cloak with which she was covered was dark in colour, like the hair-seating of her resting-place, she was effectually screened from observation. Looking in the direction from which the voices came, she saw Mrs Montserrat and Marks close by the fire ; the former seemed just to have placed a lighted candle upon the chimney-piece, and was standing with her back to Ruth, and between her and the butler.

‘ What kept you ?’ inquired Marks ; ‘ I thought you’d never come,’ were the first distinct words that Ruth caught.

‘ Why, I fancied I heard a stir,’ replied the other, ‘ and I kept still as a mouse. I feared,’ she added, with a low laugh, ‘ that it might be the *gouvernante* ; but I listened at the door before I came down ; and she’s quiet, *ma foi*, as a snared rabbit that can’t twist an inch.’

‘ There is no doubt, Marguerite, but you did her business cleverly.’

‘ Not so cleverly, after all, that I’d like to have ventured on it if *le maître* himself had been at our elbow. But, Joshua, if you had but seen the letter she sent to Madame ! Fortunately, I got hold of it in time. I cannot tell what that fool might have done, if it had come into her hands. She enclosed a note from some uncle of hers in it, so I pitched them both into the fire, and sent her back a message of my own from Madame. A great thing to have her clear off, out of our way, I can tell you ; I wouldn’t have that one here after to-morrow night’s little work—no, not for a thousand francs. Demure as she looks, she’s deep and dangerous. Bless yourself, you *pauvre homme*, that you haven’t her scenting you out ; she’d be worse than a detective.’

The man shuddered at the last word. ‘ Hush ! for Heaven’s sake, don’t talk of those folks just now,’ he said. ‘ But, Marguerite, come to business, my good woman ; tell me again exactly what you know of the captain’s goings-to-morrow.’

‘ Why, I heard him tell Madame that he would be early in the day in Lisburn, at the Downshire Arms ; that he was then going to the Black Swan—a public-house, on the road somewhere near Hillsborough ; that he had an appointment there with tenants, and was to receive rents ; and that he would pick up the evening mail-car at Banbridge, that carries the cross-post along—I don’t know where, but it would drop him, he said, as it passed, at Common Cross. And now mind : “ Let Marks,” he said, “ or one of the men, meet me there at half-past seven, to bring up my bag. But I don’t wish it to be known, Maria, what way I am coming”—if I didn’t laugh in my sleeve at this—“ for the country is not over-quiet, and I shall have a large sum of money that I must bring with me, as I should not be in time to lodge it in the bank.” ’

‘ You have it all pat, my jewel,’ returned Marks, ‘ and there never was anything so lucky : let me see ; and he leaned over the fire, upon the chimney-piece, as if reflecting upon the information.

‘ Well,’ exclaimed the housekeeper, half-angrily, after a few moments’ silence, ‘ sure ’tis all plain sailing now.’

‘ Yes, plain as day,’ said the other, looking up. ‘ I must take care to be the one to meet my brave captain to-morrow night.’

‘ Leave that to me ; but see that you don’t bungle the business ; *le maître* has his wits about him ; remember that.’

‘ Oh, the thing is simple enough now ; trust me, I’ll not put my foot in it, with such a fair opportunity. Everything turns out just as we could wish it ; doesn’t it ? But, stop a moment—goodness send he has left *the little persuader* where it always lies, in the drawer here ;’ and the pair walked across to the large secretary that stood at the opposite side of the room. Marks unlocked it with a key that he took from his pocket, and then there was a sound of different drawers being opened. ‘ Ah, here it is ;’ and in a second or two the appalled listener on the sofa heard the peculiar click which told it was a deadly weapon that the man was examining. ‘ Loaded and all, by jimini ! Faith, the fellow little dreamed, when he was last loading this, that, as they say, “ he was cutting a rod for his own back.” ’ And a suppressed laugh broke from them both.

‘ But now,’ inquired Mrs Montserrat, ‘ tell me how you mean to manage. ’Tis safer to settle all here, in the dead of night, with no one to be the wiser, than to be seen talking together when people are about. Don’t you think I was right to manage it so ?’

‘ To be sure ; you’re always right, my dear ! Well, when we come together from Common Cross, by the Oak Walk, as he always comes, I’ll be behind, as is most respectful ; there’ll be a little bit of a young moon up, I suspect, light enough for work, and not too light for mischief ; and when we get to the lonesomest bit, where the road turns, and the trees are thickest, just by the lake-side, why, then’—and he cocked the pistol with a significant gesture. ‘ Next I’ll send this down to the bottom of the water, where it will tell no tales ; and then I’ll get at the tin, quick as a weasel would lick the blood of the rat he had throttled, and home like a shot, when do you be at hand to slip all the swag away, and then a story is easily made up of murder and robbery as we were coming home, and the fellow making off. Do you understand ?’

‘ I do,’ returned Mrs Montserrat, speaking with deliberation. ‘ That might answer very well ; but we must be prepared for all difficulties. Suppose, now, that he sends you on before him.’

‘ Well, if he does, sure and ’tis done all the same. ’Tis easy to lie by in the trees there where I say, and to manage it as he comes up.’

‘ Yes ; but you might miss him ; or you mightn’t do him outright ; and ’tis only dead men, mind, that don’t tell. And, Joshua, if you only hit him—if you didn’t shoot him dead, he’d be an awful man, I tell you, to have the last bout with.’

‘ Never you fear,’ replied the miscreant ; ‘ I’ll put the grapping-irons in him. Let me but get good aim, and he’ll not speak many words after ; besides, ’tis a simple thing to silence him, once he’s down. Then, my hearty, our course is clear ; no one will suspect us. Just as well, though, as you say, that that unsafe-looking craft, the governess, is off the stocks. They’ll be offering rewards, and all that sort of foolery. Missis, most likely, won’t be for staying here. Anyways, you and I, after a decent time, when the hubbub settles down a bit, can be off quietly over the water with the needful, my dear (and here he nudged the woman with his elbow), ‘ to make us snug in our old age.’

‘ We may as well, then,’ responded the housekeeper, drawing a long breath, ‘ just sweep off what’s here now.’

Then there followed a ransacking of different

drawers in Captain Sinclair's secretary, a rattling of silver and sovereigns, and the rustle of notes, with occasional remarks and exclamations. During all the preceding conference, Ruth remained perfectly motionless, overwhelmed at this marvellous revelation of villainy, and so absorbed in the thought of the danger hanging over Captain Sinclair's head, that she had not yet even realized what her own position might be, if she were suddenly discovered by the two conspirators. It was only as they were closing the secretary, and evidently preparing to decamp, that this startling thought rushed upon her. She had, now and again, cast a glance upon them as they stood with their backs to her, both at the fireplace and secretary; but except as she did so, she instinctively kept her eyes close shut, as if in sleep; while her very breathing seemed stilled from the attention that she was constrained to give to every syllable they spoke. Now one silent, earnest prayer for safety rose from her throbbing heart, as she felt what she might expect if they found her, with their horrible secret disclosed. Already the butler and housekeeper had reached the door; Mrs Montserrat had her hand upon the lock, and was still saying something to Marks, but either in so much lower a key, or Ruth's extreme agitation as the moment of peril was passing, deadened her hearing. Whatever it was, she did not catch it until the words: 'Restez, restez; give me the key,' when the housekeeper returned quickly across the room. She had not advanced many steps, when, by her stopping suddenly, dropping the key from her hand, and ejaculating in a trembling whisper: 'Mon Dieu!' Ruth *felt*, for she dared not open her eyes, that the dread discovery was made. A dead silence, in which seconds seemed expanded into hours, ensued. At last, Marks, while his teeth chattered in the extreme of alarm, asked: 'What is it? For God's sake, what ails you?'

There was no reply; but the tall figure moved swiftly to the sofa, and Ruth felt the panting breath of her enemy, and knew that the terrible eyes were glaring upon her like those of a beast at bay. Marks stole trembling to her side. '*Mon Dieu, la gouvérnante!*' was the quivering ejaculation.

'Is she asleep?' inquired the other, and his ashy lips could scarcely form the words, so great was his fear.

'Asleep or awake, it matters not: whatever brought her here, she sleeps her last to-night,' and the voice that sealed her doom sounded in the ears of the unfortunate listener more like the hiss of a serpent than a human utterance. 'Give me that,' and she stretched out her hand for the pistol that Marks still held.

'Are you mad, woman? A shot in the house at this hour of the night!'

'True—true; you're right. Stay, I know what will do; and with the same swift noiseless motion, so habitual to her, she passed to the sideboard at the other end of the long apartment, followed by Marks. Ruth cast one despairing glance towards the door, but saw that escape was hopeless in that quarter, as the murderers were now directly between her and it. Mrs Montserrat softly opened a drawer in the sideboard, and, after a brief search, took out a long sharp-pointed steel kept there, and used for sharpening knives. 'Listen to me now,' she said in a fierce commanding whisper, turning to Marks: 'when I give you the signal, do you instantly gag her with this—and she handed him a handkerchief—and seize her hands at the same time; I'll manage the rest.'

'Oh, but stop a moment,' remonstrated Marks; 'let us not have more bloodshed than we need. God bless me, 'tis horrible; maybe she's asleep.'

'How can we tell? Remember, she may know enough by this time to hang us both. See, too, man,'

she continued; 'better to have her out of the way entirely. If we sink her body to-night in the lake, we'll be far off before it comes up again, and they'll think she made off. Besides, I have more reasons than one for wishing her off my road.'

'I tell you, Marguerite, we had best let her live, if she's asleep; it's an awful thing to bring so much blood upon one's self.'

'Do you want, you fool, to have the rope round your neck?' answered the woman, with irritation. 'Besides, I'm not asking you to do the job; I'll do it myself.'

'Well, just try first if she's asleep, can't you,' returned the man; and he drew her over towards the sofa again. Every sentence spoken, though hardly above the breath, was distinctly audible to the terrified listener. She lay, hopeless, passive, an almost unbreathing form; an icy horror seemed to pervade her whole frame; with one despairing effort at self-preservation, she remained under the semblance of the deepest sleep, and that was all that she could do; she felt it to be her one sole chance. They both bent over the all but inanimate figure, watching for the quivering of an eyelid, or a flush upon the pale cheek, that might indicate the consciousness of their presence. 'Feel her pulse,' whispered Marks. Most fortunately, she heard him, otherwise, no doubt, a violent start would have betrayed her, when the long, cold, snake-like fingers crept up her hand, and pressed upon the wrist: over its beating, poor Ruth could have exercised no control; and she imputed it only, under Providence, to the still calm of despair, that a wild fluttering there did not at once disclose that her sleep was feigned.

'She certainly is asleep,' muttered Mrs Montserrat.

'Then come here a moment,' earnestly rejoined Marks; and the two slowly retired, putting out the candle, as it seemed to Ruth; and for a considerable time she heard the indistinct murmur at the door, when the sound of its gently closing reached her relieved ear, and she concluded that she was alone and in darkness. Yet still she lay quiet, while now a cold clammy perspiration broke out at every pore; and the lifting of the pressure of the last hour brought back so tumultuous a throbbing to her heart, that it became well-nigh insupportable. She was just about to rise from her recumbent position, when again the door opened, and though there was no light, there was the rustle of a tread on the carpet, and the sound of a hand feeling for something on the floor. It was Mrs Montserrat, seeking for the dropped key. In a few minutes, her search seemed successful; she stood immovable for a brief period, as if to satisfy herself that the sleeper had not awakened; and then went out as silently as she had entered. A considerable time elapsed before the poor creature, who had been subjected to so fearful an ordeal, dared to move either hand or foot. Her excited imagination conjured up a thousand terrific phantoms in the silence and the darkness of that room. Again and again she fancied that she could detect Mrs Montserrat's stealthy step returning, or feel her hot breath; or she was convinced she caught the low whispers renewed beside the door; at last, raising herself into a sitting posture, and peering into the dense gloom, she slipped off the sofa, and groped her way to the fireplace. There was not now a single spark in the grate, so she searched in the usual place for the matches, and lit the candle: it was ten minutes to three by the timepiece before her. Glancing once more with a shudder round the room, she went out into the hall, crouching down like a hunted thing that would flee anywhere for shelter. 'I must,' she thought, 'make my way back to my own room; but I wish I was safe up those stairs.' As rapidly as she could, she hurried on, and with difficulty suppressed the scream that rushed to her lips, as her own elongated shadow fell upon the wall before her at a turn of

the stairs. After a careful survey of both her own apartments, she locked the outer door, and leaving the candle alight, for she could stay no more in the dark, she threw herself again upon her bed, to try and think over the awful past two hours, and consider what course she should take to provide for Captain Sinclair's safety. A thousand different thoughts and plans whirled through her brain, but one determination was ultimately fixed upon: to see Mrs Sinclair, at all hazards, before leaving the house, and to tell her exactly what she had heard; and if this failed in making the necessary impression—if she were incredulous to so astounding a tale, as, with her prejudices and impressions, she very possibly might be—then, to make her way direct to the captain himself, and put him on his guard. Somewhat calmed when she had thus settled upon a definite course, and retaining no single concern for herself or her distracted affairs, she lay on her side, with her eyes fixed upon the window, looking out into the darkness, and waiting until it was time for her to get up, to see Mrs Sinclair, and then to leave that dreadful house for ever.

CHAPTER VIII.

Ruth lay in a dreamy trance of thought, but not asleep, when a knock aroused her. It was a servant, who called out that it was time to get up, for that the man with the car would be round at the door immediately. She found it no easy task to complete her toilet that morning; pins dropped from her cold and trembling fingers, and in her confusion, she could find nothing she wanted. The unsnuffed candle had nearly burned to the socket, and gave but a flaring uncertain light; and her heart beat tumultuously at the thought of the coming interview with Mrs Sinclair, and apprehensive doubts as to its result. 'I must try, at all events,' she exclaimed, as she finished her dressing at last, and issued from her room with her candle in her hand. She turned up the second short flight of stairs, and advanced towards the door of her late employer's bedchamber; she was in the act of opening it, when Mrs Montserrat, gliding from what quarter Ruth knew not, but pressing in between her and the door, confronted her, with the old sneering and defiant smile wreathing her lips. 'And what does Mademoiselle mean?' she asked in a grating whisper, 'by attempting to disturb Madame at such an hour of the morning as this? Madame, who is so poorly, and in fact extremely ill from all she went through yesterday.'

Ruth, though at the first startled and unstrung, and considerably embarrassed at this unexpected apparition, recovered her self-possession almost immediately. 'I wished so much, Mrs Montserrat, to see Mrs Sinclair,' she replied. 'I wrote to her yesterday, and—*and* I wanted to speak to her about that letter, for I only got a verbal refusal to it.' Ruth felt, as she was speaking, that the eyes of the woman were literally going through and through her; all she said was at random—the first thing she could think of. 'Maybe,' she added, 'she might relent, and allow me to stay on until Captain Sinclair returns.'

'No use, Mademoiselle—no use. I can't possibly allow Madame to be disturbed.'

'Well, Mrs Montserrat,' rejoined Ruth, growing more determined as she felt the importance of the attempt, 'I must see Mrs Sinclair, and I won't be kept out by any one;' and she made an effort to get by the housekeeper, and force her way into the room.

'Upon my word,' ejaculated Mrs Montserrat, now eyeing her antagonist with a suspicious, alarmed look, 'we'll take care of that;' and driving Ruth forcibly aside, she quickly and softly turned the key in the door at which they were standing, and deliberately put it into her pocket. 'Come, now,

if you please, and raise no more of your disturbances in the house,' she added in an angry voice; and putting her hand rudely upon her shoulder, she compelled Ruth to go down the stairs before her.

Seeing that there was no use in resistance, and judging it safer, for the present, not to awaken any suspicion, she yielded, without further parley, to the housekeeper's violence.

On the stairs, they met Marks coming up; a significant glance passed between the two. 'Bring down her things, will you, at once,' said Mrs Montserrat to her accomplice; adding something in a whisper that Ruth could not hear.

The hall-door was open, and the car already at it; but it was a strange driver—not Patsey, as Bridget had promised. While the housekeeper and Ruth were standing in the outer hall waiting for Marks's return, the former shading the candle from the cold blast with her hand, Bridget suddenly burst open the door leading up from the lower parts of the house, and hastened into the hall with a large bowl of tea and some bread on a plate. 'There, Miss Morrison!' she exclaimed indignantly. 'She wouldn't let me call you,' nodding towards Mrs Montserrat: 'and she wanted to hinder me seeing you at all; but, miss, I have brought you a drop of tea and a bit of bread, and, for God's sake, take it before you go out this cold morning; wisha, God help us!' exclaimed the poor sympathising girl; and the ready tears began to gather as she looked upon Ruth, and beheld the scared, white expression of her face, with the dark circles under the large and unnatural-looking eyes.

Mrs Montserrat said nothing, but cast a frowning look upon the housemaid that spoke more than words, and which the other returned with a scornful toss of her head.

'Indeed, Bridget,' said Ruth, 'I am greatly obliged to you, but I could not touch bit or sup; and her sad hollow voice went to the very heart of the servant.'

'Take it, Miss Morrison, darling,' she whispered, 'if it was only to spite her: 'twill do you good; shan't thy the drop of tea.'

She so far yielded as to drink a few drops of the hot liquor, and felt a little warmed and refreshed by it.

'Did you sleep a bit at all last night?' asked the housemaid.

Ruth knew that the woman standing at her side was watching her reply, for she turned instantly as the question was put. Wishing to divert from her mind any lurking suspicion she may have had, she answered: 'Oh, I had one good sleep that refreshed me a great deal, though it was not in bed. I went down to the dining-room to ascertain the hour: I thought it was late, having forgotten to wind my watch, but I found that it was only a little after one; the fire was still burning, and I was so cold that I remained below, and fell asleep on the sofa there for I don't know how long.'

'Poor thing! God help you!' replied Bridget.

Mrs Montserrat appeared relieved and satisfied by this colloquy, for when she passed out to the door with Marks, as he brought down Ruth's luggage, she whispered to him: 'All right; no fear.' They both remained outside, and seemed in earnest conference with the driver, while the things were being settled on the car.

'Tian't Patsey, after all,' said Bridget: 'that fellow wouldn't let him go.' She had no time for more. Ruth bade her a hearty adieu, when told that all was ready now. Marks and Mrs Montserrat remained watching her from the door, until a turn in the avenue shut out the car from view. One long look she cast back at the place that had been, in one sense, her home for more than a year past. How much of discomfort and trial she had borne during those thirteen months!—not, however, without some

gleams of sunlight breaking through the dark clouds of recollection. Fondly she thought of the little ones, and with grateful love dwelt upon that last touching farewell. Then came the overwhelming, terrifying remembrance of her protector's danger, and the rest of the weary wretched drive to Newry was wholly occupied in deliberation upon what she should now do, foiled as she had been in her first attempt at saving him. The current of her thoughts was left free from any disturbance by her driver—a gruff, surly man, who never opened his lips during the drive, but occasionally eyed his companion askance across the car from the side he occupied. Of him, however, the poor girl thought little; she was pondering on the best course to pursue, and trying to recall the route she had overheard Captain Sinclair was to take.

'How foolish I was,' she thought, 'to say that I wanted to speak to Mrs Sinclair about the letter, when I remember that wretch said she had intercepted it; sure that alone would have made her keep me out. Reach him I must, at once; yet now I cannot remember one or two places they spoke of. Lisburn I recollect distinctly; he was to be early at the Downshire Arms. But where was he to go from that? Dear—I don't know what ails me! I can remember nothing.'

At no time conversant with the names of many northern towns or places, her brain was completely bewildered. A kind of maddening confusion made her forget the next minute what was clear and distinct to her just before. She kept repeating 'Lisburn' to herself over and over, for fear she might even let go that one clue, and was still endeavouring to call up some more of the forgotten details, when she was startled from her reverie by the driver breaking silence as they were entering the town, by saying, in a rude coarse tone: 'I suppose I've to drive you to the coach-office?'

For a moment or two, she was so confused that she could not answer. 'No, thank you,' she said at last; 'to the hotel, please.'

'Why, sure, you're going to Dublin?'

'Yes,' responded Ruth; 'but I am not well enough to go on yet; and I must stop first at the hotel.'

She might in perfect truth have said that, for she was far indeed from being well; she had never felt so utterly unstrung. The morning, though not actually wet, was raw and gloomy. As they drove down the street in Newry leading to the hotel which Ruth had indicated, the shop-boys were taking down shutters from the windows, and stopped to look after the car as it passed. There was the youth yawning at Jenkins the watchmaker's door, whom she remembered so well in the shop the last day she had been there. The flags were damp and sloppy, the streets covered with mud and pools of water from the past wet night. The car drew up at the door of the hotel; a red-haired, unshaved, sleepy-looking waiter in slippers, with a napkin across his arm, sauntered out.

'Going to stop here, miss?'

'Yes, for the present,' said Ruth; 'at least,' as she remembered the driver was behind, probably watching her, 'until I get on to Dublin. Will you have my things brought in?'

'A private sitting-room, miss?' again asked the man.

'No; I sha'n't be here long enough to need it,' was the answer. 'Shew me anywhere for the present.'

Accordingly, the man conducted her down a dark passage, and opened the door of the coffee-room, where she was glad to see a cheerful fire, the comfort of which she sadly needed. As she stood beside the fireplace, and looked from it through the window into the street, she observed her driver and the waiter in close communication, while her luggage was being got off the car.

'I may as well,' she thought, 'give something to

that man, uncivil as he seems; he might well expect it this miserable morning.'

She put her hand into her pocket for her purse; in utterable consternation, she found her pocket empty—no purse was there. Vainly she searched her garments; nothing of the kind had she anywhere about her. What had she done with it? She could only recollect that she had had it the night before, and had reckoned its contents; beyond that, she could recall nothing about purse or money. Very probably, in the distracted turmoil she had been in, she had left it in her own room; but the unwelcome certainty was before her now, that there she was in that strange inn without a penny to pay her way. She sat down, half-stupified from such a fresh accession to her miseries. 'I shall surely go mad,' she moaned, and then the thought of Captain Sinclair recurred, and she started up and drew out her watch to see the hour—it was half-past eight.

'I have this watch, at all events—the poor captain's kind gift; I can get something on it, surely, somewhere;' and then she remembered that there was the chain she bought for Ferdinand in her trunk, and that if she took it back to Mr Jenkins, he would give her, she supposed, as much for it as would enable her to get on to Lisburn. She stepped out into the hall, and called to the waiter to have her trunk brought into the coffee-room. The man was standing at the door, still talking to the driver from Oaklands. Ruth repeated her request, but the waiter only turned and gave her an insolent stare, and resumed his conversation without any further notice. Boiling with indignation, she walked up to him, and asked haughtily: 'Do you mean, sir, to attend to what I have asked you, or must I quit this hotel, and seek for one where I may meet with common civility?'

What the fellow might have responded it is hard to say, if he had not heard a voice calling, of which he evidently stood in some awe.

'Well, miss,' said he hastily, 'what do you want?'

'I want that trunk brought in here at once,' she answered.

Without another word, she was obeyed. After a search through its contents, she found the chain in the very bottom of the box; and locking all up again in tangled confusion, and wrapping up with a bitter sigh the gift she had designed for a far other purpose, she hurriedly left the hotel, and repaired to the watchmaker's. There was no one but the same boy in the shop. He said Mr Jenkins wasn't down yet. Ruth replied she would wait, as she wanted to see him very particularly; and after a while, begged of the lad to ask if his master would soon be down. He returned with a message to say he was coming, yet a full half-hour elapsed before he appeared. When he did come, he evidently was not in the best of humours; he looked as if he was still half asleep. 'Well, miss, what can I do for you?' he asked quickly as he entered the shop. 'You are rather an early customer.'

Ruth, in a few hesitating words, explained her request, offering him the chain.

'O miss,' said the man, looking excessively annoyed, 'you mistake; this is not a pawnbroker's establishment. You'll find one in the next street.'

Ruth again explained that she had lost her purse—that it was a matter of the utmost importance to her to get to Lisburn at once—that all she wanted or cared for was simply what would pay for a car there—and that she'd be sure again gratefully to take back the chain, and repay him the loan.

The watchmaker, with an angry frown, took out the same old cash-box Ruth had seen before from the press, and opening it, reckoned fifteen shillings, and handed it to Ruth. 'I'll oblige you with that,' he said; 'though I must say it is a very strange thing for you to ask it; and then tossing the chain into the box, he locked it.'

Ruth thanked him, and eagerly seizing the money, hurried from the shop without another word. Once the suggestion occurred, as she pursued her way back to the hotel—would it be better to repair to a magistrate, if she could find one, and tell him all that had happened? Yet then she remembered that the tale of her own suspected guilt should of necessity be disclosed; and 'he'd never believe me,' she thought; 'he'd think I was some fraudulent impostor: everybody suspects me.' To get to Lisburn and find Captain Sinclair, seemed to her to be the one and only feasible project. When she returned to the hotel, she found the driver still lingering about the door; she handed him a shilling as she passed, which he took with scarcely an expression of thanks. She dreaded setting out for Lisburn while he was yet on the watch, as she had a kind of undefined apprehension that he was a creature of Marks and Mrs. Montserrat—was lurking about now at their instigation, and might, in some unknown way, deter her from prosecuting her journey, if he knew whether she was bound. Time, however, was a matter of too much importance just then, and feeling that no more could be wasted with safety, she resolved to risk everything else, and set out for Lisburn as soon as possible. She rang the bell, and inquired, on the waiter's appearance, if she could see the landlord himself. 'He's out,' was the laconic reply. 'Well, the landlady?' The man was inclined to be offensively rude and familiar—the result, Ruth surmised, of the conversation between him and the car-driver; he muttered something scarcely intelligible, and holding the door half open, he looked out into the passage.

'I say, Peggy, is missis there?'

'She is. What's wanting?'

'Tell her that a young woman here must see her, she says—her as came a while ago on the car from Oaklands; and a few words inaudible to Ruth, accompanied with a sneering laugh, followed.

'Oh!' and then a loud shrill voice called out: 'Missis, you're awanting; a summons that, in the lapse of a few minutes, brought the landlady herself into the coffee-room. She was a red-faced, bustling-looking woman, from whom, in her present nervous, sensitive mood, Ruth shrank, dreading some further insolent rudeness.

'I beg your pardon,' she began mildly; 'but I was very anxious to see either the landlord himself or you.'

'Well, miss, and what can I do for you?' asked the woman, in a not ungracious tone.

'It is of importance,' continued Ruth, and she looked pleadingly into the landlady's face—'I could not tell you of how much importance, not to myself, but to others, that I should get to Lisburn as fast as ever I can; and I'm afraid if I haven't a quick horse, I shall never be there in time. Can you give me a good horse and car—a really good one? I'm ready to pay whatever you ask. That's why I wished to speak to yourself. Indeed, indeed,' she added, and the poor worn-out creature trembled so from nervous anxiety, that she had to grasp the back of the chair at which she was standing for support, 'I don't know what may take place if I don't get on soon.'

'I'll do what I can for you, my poor thing,' said the woman in a soft motherly manner. 'There, don't take on so; for the unwonted words of kindness brought up the quickly gathering tears. 'Look, couldn't you send a messenger to Lisburn? I'll fetch one that'll do your bidding well, if it's a matter of so much importance; and do you stay quiet, and rest here a bit.'

'O no, no; thank you a thousand times. Indeed, I must get on, and at once, please; for she began to feel actual terror now at every instant's delay. 'I suppose,' added Ruth, as the woman was bustling from the room to see about the car, 'I might leave my trunk here for the present?'

'To be sure, to be sure, if you like.' And then she heard the inquiries as to what horses were out, and which of those in was the freshest; and very soon, a covered car was round, into which the good-natured woman herself packed Ruth, saying she would not, on any account, let her drive so far in an open conveyance, and that the charge should be all the same. She insisted likewise on her taking a glass of wine and a biscuit, early as the hour was—to cheer her up, she said—and wouldn't hear of payment; and comforted her with the assurance, that Roger, the horse, and Mat, the driver, were the best-matched pair in the Kilmorey Arms, and would have her in Lisburn 'in less nor no time.'

'Twenty-four miles!' ejaculated Ruth, in consternation, as she was told the distance. 'Oh!' she groaned, 'I shall never catch him; I shall be late, I shall be late.'

It was a quarter to ten as they drove out of Newry, and for the first few miles they appeared to make very good way; then there was a manifest falling-off, a more urgent application of the whip on the part of Mat, and a constantly-diminishing rate of speed on the part of Roger. The car, too, was most uncomfortable in its motion, swaying from side to side, as the horse got into a kind of jog-trot, that produced, in the weary, anxious traveller, pain in her side and uneasy sickness. She sat with her watch in her hand nearly the entire way, calling occasionally through the small window to know if he could manage to get on a little faster; an entreaty that caused an immediate application of the whip, and perhaps a minute's accelerated motion, but no more. Hour by hour sped along that strange load, with more than once a leap of joy to her heart, when she imagined that some small town to which they were approaching was Lisburn, followed by depressing disappointment at learning her mistake. Ultimately, Ruth abandoned all hope of overtaking Captain Sinclair. 'Why had she not adopted some step in Newry? He will be murdered,' she exclaimed in agony, 'and it will be all my fault.' Then she tortured her brain to try and remember what other places she had heard them say he would be in, but she could not recollect; and so the time passed on, until at last the driver called to her through the window that there was Lisburn just right before them; and he pointed to it triumphantly with his whip, as though he had effected a great achievement in getting there at all.

'Where am I to drive to?' he called out again.

'Oh, to the Downshire Arms Hotel; and please, quick.' When they stopped, her tongue was so dry, her mouth so parched, that she could not for a moment articulate the question she so longed to put to the obsequious waiter who came to open the door of the car.

'Is Captain Sinclair here?' she almost gasped.

'Well, ma'am, I rather think he is,' said the man. 'I have been out; but if you please to come in, I'll inquire.' The mention of the captain's name appeared to elicit still more courtesy from the attendant. No words could convey the thrilling sensation of relief poor Ruth experienced as she heard that her almost abandoned hope might still be realised; and with a firm step, she walked into the sitting-room that the man opened for her.

'I want to see Captain Sinclair at once,' she repeated; 'please see after him without a moment's delay.'

'Yes, ma'am, at once;' and the speaker hastily withdrew. In less than two minutes he returned, and, oh, how long it seemed to Ruth! 'He left this, ma'am, more than two hours ago. I was out, you see,' added the man apologetically. 'I knew he had been here, but I didn't know he was gone.'

Down to her feet the cold chill, the deadly anguish of disappointment ran like ice. 'Oh, what am I to do?' she groaned, putting her hand to her forehead.

'Very sorry, indeed, ma'am, very sorry,' repeated the man, looking a little disconcerted at the troubled aspect of the figure before him.

'Oh, could you, will you find out at once where Captain Sinclair went?' again implored Ruth.

'Certainly, ma'am, certainly;' and the waiter hurried off upon this second errand.

But Ruth, in her intense desire to ascertain what she wanted, followed him into the hall, where he was questioning Boots on the subject of her inquiry. 'Where did he go to from this? Did he take a car?' she asked, interrupting the other interlocutor.

'He took a car, ma'am; yes, it was a little before twelve; but the captain never tells where he's going, nor what way either. I'm sure none of the men knows: I'll ask the hostler, though, if you wish, ma'am.'

'Do,' said Ruth, but in a despairing voice, and she tottered back to the room like one intoxicated. She had just thrown herself on the nearest chair, when she heard the tread of, it seemed, two people coming down the stairs, and then a quick voice in the hall, that sent the blood like an electric shock careering through her frame. She bounded from her seat, and stood with extended arms to listen again. In an instant, two gentlemen—one elderly, gray-haired, the other, tall and young—passed arm-in-arm, by the window, down the street. One wild cry broke from her: 'Call him, call him! O Ferdy, Ferdy!' and she sank senseless on the floor.

Just at half-past seven o'clock, the evening of the 29th of December, the mail-car from Banbridge drew up at the public-house, or, as the owner would have called it, the inn, at Common Cross, that rejoiced in the sign and title of the Golden Sheaf. A fine painted specimen of ripe corn flourished on the board that swung on one side of the door, while large letters underneath announced that there was entertainment provided, with good beds, for man and beast. This place of resort was well known in the neighbourhood, and the buxom landlady, a widow, fat, fair, and forty, was a universal favourite. Rumour had it, at one time, that the portly personage who had been in close and familiar gossip with her for the last half hour by the brisk fire in her snug little parlour, was a favoured suitor; but upon Mr Marks's advances, the widow had never really smiled. He often took, it is true, 'a draught of her best,' and had an occasional friendly chat with her; but he was no great favourite with the mistress of the Golden Sheaf. She encouraged his visits, for she valued his custom, and greatly enjoyed hearing the odds and ends of news the butler contrived to pick up; but beyond this she went not. Just now, they had had a most comfortable and confidential communication together on the unusual events of the preceding day, when the sound of the mail-car made them both start up, and Marks appeared at the door, with Mrs McGrath behind him, holding a candle.

Captain Sinclair jumped down—'Oh, is that you, Marks? All well above?'

'All well, sir—all well,' and he touched his hat.

'Here, Mick,' said the captain, handing the driver his gratuity.

'Thank you, captain—thank you, sir,' rejoined the man, in the hearty tone of one who appreciates the donor as well as the gift bestowed.

'Take care: are my traps all here?' he added, as the man was about to drive off. 'Portmanteau, small box, coat, rug, umbrella: yes, all right.'

'Good-night, sir.'—'Good-night,' and the car drove rapidly away.

'Confoundedly cold night it is!' exclaimed the captain.

'Yes, indeed, sir,' responded Marks, and his teeth chattered as he spoke.

'Here, take these things on,' and he threw his coat

and rug on the portmanteau that was on the ground. 'I'll warm my feet for a moment at your bright fire, Mrs McGrath, for I declare I don't think I could get on, I'm so perished;' and he stamped upon the door-step.

'And welcome, captain, welcome,' responded the smiling dame; 'and maybe you'd let me get you a little drop of something warm: a little taste of mulled wine,' she added in a lower tone; 'twould take the chill out of you better than anything else.'

'No, no, thank you, Mrs McGrath; nothing but three minutes of your fire for my feet, and then I'll be off home.'

'Will you go up, sir, by the Oak Walk, or the avenue?' inquired Marks, who was still standing at the door.

'By the short way, the Oak Walk, to be sure,' responded his master. 'Why, on earth, do you ask?'

'Only,' muttered the man, 'that Corbett's wife, at the gate-house, is sick, and I suspect they're all abed by this, and the gates locked.'

'Oh, no matter; I'll go up the other way, of course.'

Upon which Marks shouldered the portmanteau, first carefully adjusting something that he had in his breast-pocket; and throwing the remaining articles upon his other arm, he trudged off down the road. 'Ha!' he whispered to himself, 'how careful he is of that small box; he wouldn't trust me with that; he'll take that himself, if you please. Maybe 'twill change owners sooner than he thinks.' The butler opened a little wicket-gate leading off the high-road, and went rapidly along until he came to the point at the lake where the walk diverged and passed on through the grove: first laying down the portmanteau at one side near the stump of a tree, and wrapping up the rug and cloak, and laying them on it, he put his hand behind his ear and bent forward, to try if he could detect the advancing footsteps; then he looked round carefully, as if measuring the ground and space with his eye. 'A little too dark, but that can't be helped,' he growled, casting an uneasy glance up to the heavens, where dense black clouds almost entirely obscured the slender light of a young moon. Once more gazing about him, and apparently satisfied with his scrutiny, he passed stealthily in among the trees, and ensconced himself behind the gnarled trunk of an old oak which, even if it had been lighter, would have sheltered him from detection; then holding the pistol, with a demoniacal grin upon his visage, he cowered down, waiting for his unconscious victim, and muttering now and then: 'Tis infernally cold. I hope that she-devil below there, at the Sheaf, won't keep him half the night.'

SOLDIERS' INSTITUTES.

SOCIETY is crying loudly to the Horse Guards and to the War Office to aid in supplying soldiers with some place or other where they may rationally amuse themselves, and also gather a little mental improvement during their spare hours in camp or garrison. As it is, the men, for the most part very uneducated, can find few places except pot-houses, and haunts of a more degrading character, where they can pass their leisure. Regimental and garrison libraries and reading-rooms are gradually being formed with good result; but something more than this is needed. The men, like the rest of us, want to be *entertained*; and unless their tastes in this way are trained upwards, there are plenty of panders to vicious life who will lead them down.

The *Soldiers' Institute* at Chatham, a self-supporting, non-governmental establishment, is worth knowing in reference to this matter. It is a handsome new building, containing a number of commodious rooms and halls. The library will accommodate about 70 men, the coffee-room, 110, the bagatelle-room, 80, and the lecture-room, 450; thus affording aggregate space for

710 at one time. The men appear to relish very highly the game of bagatelle; as a consequence of which, three bagatelle-tables have been added to those originally provided. In the matter of open-air recreations, there are four skittle-alleys, two American bowling-alleys, and fives' and racket courts; and some of the men, by a separate arrangement, have the use of a cricket-ground. This establishment is quite, or very nearly, a self-paying one, to which each soldier can belong or not, according to his inclination; and it is certainly better that he should play even at skittles at the Institute, than in the back-yard of a low pot-house.

The management of the whole is so planned as to give the soldiers a voice and an interest in the maintenance of good order. There is a *general* committee of twenty-four members, two-thirds of whom are officers; they meet on the second Saturday in the month, to receive the reports of other committees, and to settle matters generally. There is a *managing* committee, of seven members of the general committee (three to form a quorum), to meet fortnightly; they receive reports from minor committees, and transact such business as will not admit of delay; the secretary and honorary treasurer of the Institute being present. There is a *sub-committee*, which meets on alternate Thursdays, and which consists of one sergeant, one corporal, and two privates, of every corps in the garrison, with the sergeants-major and the schoolmasters as *ex-officio* members. This sub-committee, rather as individuals than as a body, canvass for subscribers to the Institute among the military stationed at Chatham, and try to promote in every way the general success of the scheme, suggesting any arrangements or improvements in the management to their colleagues or the managers. Twelve members of the sub-committee form an *executive* committee, divided into two sections, of which the *finance* committee takes cognizance of everything connected with the monetary transactions of the Institute, such as the ordering, selection, and supervision of the stores and refreshments, the orders for these being countersigned by the secretary of the sub-committee; while the *house* committee investigates complaints, takes notice of the conduct of members when present, has charge of the games, and looks after the attendants. Two members, at least, of the sub-committee are present every evening, to superintend and control. A paid under-secretary and treasurer, receives daily, from the caterer or manager of the refreshment department, all money obtained from the sale of articles at the bar, &c.; he hands over the account to the honorary treasurer, who authorises the payment of bills to tradesmen, and wages to attendants, at stated periods. To us, we must confess, it appears that there is somewhat overmuch of committee-organisation here; but it may be found to work well, especially as the soldiers themselves have so large a part in the management.

The rules by which this excellent establishment is governed may be shortly stated. Any one of the soldiers stationed at Chatham (often eight thousand in number) may be a member, at a cost of fourpence per month, payable in advance; soldiers of the Invalid Dépôt to be regarded as honorary members. Members' friends and relatives, who may come from a distance, are invited to avail themselves of the Institute. Books and newspapers may be taken to the barracks to read, if the librarian consents—that is, subject to the due convenience of the library and reading-room. No gambling, and no improper language, are permitted within the place. None of the games permitted at the Institute—chess, draughts, bagatelle, German billiards, racket, fives, &c.—are to be played on Sundays, or books issued; but the Institute is open after dinner-hours. The coffee-room is open at an early hour every week-day in the summer months, to enable the soldiers to have coffee before going to

drill; and the Institute is generally open till eleven in the evening, subject to the consent of the military authorities. Refreshments of various kinds are provided at low and fixed prices, denoted on lists hung up near the bar. Tobacco is provided at cost prices, and smoking is allowed in the coffee-rooms. One of the rules is framed in an excellent spirit. 'The object of the promoters of the Institute being to provide real comfort, recreation, and amusing instruction for the soldiers of the garrison during their leisure hours, the general committee consider that this can best be attained on the principle of self-government, and by the absence of restraint in dress and in everything else, as far as is consistent with good order.' There is a judicious and quite legitimate mode adopted for advertising the advantages of the Institute, arising from the fact, that all the men in the Invalid Dépôt—larger at Chatham than in any other part of the kingdom—are honorary members. Six thousand soldiers, from every corps in the service, have been known to pass through that establishment in one year; and these men, when they go to their own homes, are found to be effective circulars for announcing what is now being done for the comfort and recreation of their companions-in-arms. Many a rough soldier is glad to be able to say that there is such a place, where he can obtain rational and cheap amusement.

It is really an important matter to decide at how low a price good provisions and beverages can be provided, and still leave a profit to the seller, or, at any rate, hold him harmless against loss. The Working-men's Dining-rooms, at Glasgow and elsewhere, have brought this subject under public notice in reference to hard-handed civilians generally; and, in a smaller degree, the Soldiers' Institute at Chatham may be made illustrative of the same matter. We say in a smaller degree, because most of the soldier-members dine together at mess in their barracks, and therefore only light refreshments—from which malt liquors and spirits are excluded—are provided at the Institute bar. Let us see how the pence and halfpence are made the best of, by those who spend some of their leisure time in this admirable place, and want a little refreshment out of their small pay. A cup of coffee or tea, 1d.; small do., ½d.; small loaf, 1d.; ham per ounce, 1d.; bacon per rasher, 1d.; German sausage per slice, 1d.; collared beef per slice, 1½d.; sausage, 1d.; herring, 1d.; egg, fried or boiled, 1d.; meat-pie, 1d.; biscuit, ½d.; pastry, 1d.; butter per ounce, 1d.; cheese per ounce, ½d.; ginger-beer, 1d.; lemonade, 2d.; tobacco, per screw, with clay-pipe, 1d. Those who are familiar with the prices of provisions will see that a small profit is realisable out of such items as the above, when served in considerable number. The humbler kind of coffee-shops in London charge a little more than this for provisions decidedly inferior in quality: and as for a halfpenny cup of coffee or tea, we have never heard of such a thing in the metropolis. One part of the arrangement may seem strange to some persons—the permission to smoke in the coffee-room; but the truth is, a soldier regards his pipe as an almost indispensable aid to his comfort in leisure hours; and if the Institute did not offer him a smoking-room, he probably would not subscribe to it. The difference is, that here he 'moistens his clay' with coffee; whereas, in a public-house or beer-shop, he muddles his brain with a mixture which goes by the name of beer, but which has been so 'doctored' that the original brewer would hardly know it again. All that is served at the bar or kitchen of the Institute is good of its kind, as well as cheap.

The building, it is agreed on all hands, cost a higher sum than ought to have been incurred. As often happens in similar cases, those who laid the plans and gave the order did not duly count the cost, or calculate on the full means for disbursement. The building is really a handsome one, in a

public road in the very midst of the government establishments. It comprises, as we have said or implied, coffee-rooms, bar-room, library, bagatelle-room, lecture-room, kitchen, store-rooms, committee-room, attendants' rooms, &c.; while in the court-yard behind is provision for several kinds of open-air games. The whole fabric cost more than five thousand pounds. The War-office contributed two thousand pounds, with an implied obligation that the Institute should pay interest on this amount. The officers at Chatham, and other well-wishers elsewhere, supplied something more than an equivalent sum; but the expense was many hundred pounds in excess of these contributions; and the barrack-master at Chatham, who is honorary secretary, and who has from the first taken a warm interest in the welfare of the establishment, is anxious to see the time when he will be relieved from a certain amount of individual responsibility that rests upon him in this matter. No one expects that the Institute will do more than pay its current expenses, for if a soldier were called upon to pay more than a penny-a-week subscription, few would subscribe; and even with many hundred subscribers, it is difficult to make the Institute pay. But it *does* pay, and this confirms in a gratifying manner the anticipations of the founders. In the operations since the opening in July 1862, the *House* Fund (subscriptions set against general expenses), the *Bar* Fund (retail prices for refreshments set against cost prices), and the *Entertainment* Fund (admission to concerts, &c., in the lecture-room, set against the expenses)—all have yielded a small surplus of profit. In the first half-year, this little surplus was eighty pounds, after paying interest on the government two thousand pounds.

There is one officer in the Queen's service, Captain Pilkington Jackson of the Royal Artillery, who deserves especial mention, because he first shewed that such Institutes might be made nearly, if not quite, self-supporting. Being at Gibraltar in 1859, and observant of the evils to which soldiers are subjected in their leisure hours, he established three 'Soldiers' Homes,' situated near three groups of barracks. He rented houses for the purpose, and laid down a code of rules similar in most points to those we have described at Chatham. Light refreshments at cheap rates, newspapers, books, periodicals, apparatus for various games, lectures given by some of the officers, &c., were provided for the members. Captain Jackson incurred a responsibility of more than a thousand pounds in furnishings and supplies, which could not fairly be looked for out of the profits. In October 1862, after three years' trial, it was found that seventeen hundred soldiers subscribed to the Home, at fourpence per month. The debt due to the benevolent founder of the club had been repaid; five hundred pounds by the government, and an equal amount by subscriptions among the officers. The current expenses were nearly paid by the subscriptions of the soldiers, and the small deficiency was made up by the officers.

A proposal for the establishment of something equivalent to a Soldiers' Institute in the large camp at Aldershot affords a good example of the art 'how not to do it.' His Royal Highness the Commander-in-chief, and the Right Honourable the Secretary of State for War, have been throwing paper pellets at each other for two years on this subject. In July 1861, the War Minister sent Captain Jackson to Aldershot 'to make himself acquainted with the requirements of the troops in camp as to a Soldiers' Institute,' and to report on the best mode of establishing and conducting such a place. Captain Jackson was engaged two months in his researches; and at the end of that time, in a Report to the War Minister, he drew a terrible picture of the state of immorality brought about in the town of Aldershot

by the presence of the troops. Panderers to vice of every kind thronged the village, ruining the health, bodily and moral, of the soldiers, and fleecing them of the small remnant of their pay. There were (besides eighteen canteens or beer-rooms in the camp, kept under strict military control) twenty-five public-houses and forty-seven beer-houses, so conducted as to lead to much worse consequences than mere drinking. The inhabitants, in resolutions afterwards passed at a public meeting, indignantly protested against the sweeping terms in which Captain Jackson had made his accusation; but testimony from other quarters afforded only too much ground for believing that he was right. Aldershot—not the little old agricultural village, but the garish town of new houses—is built within a stone's throw of the permanent barracks which the government have, unfortunately, built close to the margin of the government property, insomuch that the seventy or eighty public-houses, and beer-shops, although so close to the barracks, are beyond the reach of military control. The soldiers have scarcely any places to go to in the intervals of duty but such as would do them and teach them more harm than good. Captain Jackson said: 'I have calculated that about two-thirds of the troops quartered at Aldershot have, on an average, five hours of leisure daily, which calculation would give nearly fifty thousand hours daily of time to be occupied for good or evil.'

Captain Jackson strongly recommended the establishment of a Soldiers' Home or Institute at Aldershot; he pointed out where it should be, and sketched a plan for its arrangement. A building large enough for a thousand men; a library and reading-room for five hundred men, with shelves of books and comfortable seats for readers; a writing-room for twenty men; a billiard-room with six full-sized tables; a museum fifty feet square, with objects of interest in glass cases round the walls; three rooms for chess, draughts, and similar games; two workshops, fitted with carpenters' benches, &c.; a refreshment-room about forty feet square, with small kitchen attached; store-rooms and offices of various kinds; a large lecture-hall, for two thousand persons, apart from, but in connection with, the principal building; and a piece of open ground for quoits, bowls, skittles—such were his recommendations. This being the main establishment, four branch Institutes were suggested, in various parts of the camp, consisting of iron or wooden buildings already existing. Supposing such place or places to be provided and duly furnished, the following would be a summary of the rules to observe: No intoxicating drinks sold, no gambling permitted, no public discussions on subjects likely to lead to wrangling; a monthly subscription of two-pence from every soldier-member; besides simple beverages, the Institute to keep for sale bread, butter, cheese, cakes, biscuits, fruit, tobacco, cigars, pipes, note-paper, envelopes, postage-stamps, and other little articles conducive to the comfort of the men; the Institute to be open from eleven in the forenoon till 'roll-call'; books and newspapers to be so selected as to meet the tastes of as large a number as possible; the books to be supplied from the garrison library without charge, changed periodically, and accounted for by the trustees; * members to be allowed to introduce relations and friends into the refreshment-room—for, otherwise, a soldier would have no place to take a visitor to, except a beer-shop. Captain Jackson proposed that there should be a Board of Trustees, appointed by the government; a Board of Management, consisting of the trustees, and of one officer from every regiment or corps in the camp; and

* Some years ago, we had an opportunity of examining a catalogue of the books forming garrison libraries, and we are bound to say, though we say it with regret, that the selection appeared almost as bad as possible.—ED.

an Executive Committee, to consist of a certain number of non-commissioned officers and privates, depending partly on the number of corps in camp, and partly on the number of men from each corps that subscribe to the Institute.

There is at Aldershot an iron club-house, on the west of the South Camp; after twice failing as an officers' club, it was offered for sale; and Captain Jackson, deeming it well suited for a (temporary) Soldiers' Institute, recommended that it, with its furniture, should be rented for one year, with liberty from the government afterwards to purchase it at a valuation. This house became a bone of contention. Early in 1862, General Pennefather, military commander of the camp, endorsed Captain Jackson's recommendations, in a way that we will state thus—the general recommended the Commander-in-chief to recommend the War Minister to recommend the captain's recommendations to the House of Commons!—a process which, we trust, will be clear to the reader. In October (1862), the much-talked of iron house being still unused, the officers begged the loan of it for the winter six months, and obtained it. The winter over, they begged for its use a little longer; and at this present day, when not required for Colonel Crawley's court-martial, the iron house is used as an officers' reception and entertainment room, for friends and visitors, as a loan from the War Minister. This last-named functionary, in the spring of the present year, said he would decide on two Institutes, one in the North Camp, and one in the South, but without using the iron club-house.

And so, after two years' writing and talking, we have not got a Soldiers' Institute at Aldershot, whatever we may have by and by.

GLEANINGS FROM DARK ANNALS.

ANTHROPOPHAGY.

Of all the heroes of moderate antiquity, perhaps the one who interests most the youthful imagination male is Mr Sawney Beane. Among all the biographies in that delightful volume, *The Lives of Highwaymen and Robbers*, his little memoir has easily the pre-eminence; there is nothing like it anywhere else; its simple truculency is Homeric; nor is there a *suspicion* of domestic economy wanting such as befits the northern origin of the principal actor in the drama in question. He not only murdered those he robbed; he not only ate those he murdered; but when the supply was excessive, he salted the surplus. The operation of pickling seems to have been unknown to him, and it is observable that his countrymen kipper their salmon to this day, rather than use the far preferable method of preservation adopted in England. The incidents of his life, which, I own, are open to much reprobation, happened so long ago, and so far away, that it is impossible to feel violent abhorrence at his conduct. We can review his proceedings now without undue prejudice, which we could scarcely have done had we been his neighbours or contemporaries. If he or his ever made a meal upon ancestor of ours, the relationship is too distant to excite personal rancour; let bygones be bygones; his story may excite in us some indignation upon public grounds, but no degree of malice. The thing that strikes us most in the man is his singular taste—not, indeed, in decoration, for his home was a mere cave, and all his carving was done at table—but in making *plates* out of his fellow-creatures. He was not, in the first instance, obliged to do so by necessity; when his family increased in the patriarchal fashion we read of, it became imperative; but upon starting in the marauding line, beef and mutton were as accessible to him as to any of us with other people's money in our pocket. Yet he began with cooking all he killed; in every fellow-creature he beheld 'meat,

drink, and clothing'—all the necessities of life. He may be considered the great originator of the self-supporting system, of which we now a days hear so much. His plan was indeed perfect, including as it did food, plunder, and an absolute impunity for his offences. Dead men tell no tales, and far less when salted. His scheme, otherwise a complete optimism, failed, however, through one of his intended victims escaping his clutches. He ran away, and 'tittle-tattled,' as the children say, and the consequence was that Mr S. Beane and family were removed from the sea-coast, under a fitting escort, into the neighbouring town, and there put to death. His establishment was brought to the hammer, but it was found impossible to dispose of the salted provisions.

Exceptional, however, as was Mr Beane's particular predilection, it is by no means unparalleled. Not only are there several savage nations who devour their foes, and even their nearest relatives, whenever they seem likely to be a burden to them; but in civilized life, ever and anon, have appeared eccentric persons with the like idiosyncrasy. You may turn the cold shoulder to them, but that is exactly what they want, and consider excellent eating. It is fair to state, however, that the *penchant* is always an acquired taste. Even a baby, plump, yet delicate, healthy, yet unmettled, would never entice a man into cannibalism for the first time. I attach no importance to the impulse that prompts certain of the lower orders, and particularly among the Irish, to bite one another's noses off, whenever any misunderstanding takes place; the defence now and then set up by these persons is sometimes, it is true, that 'they could not help it,' 'they could not *resist* it,' &c.; but they do not mean that the morsel was so tempting in an epicurean sense, but only that it lay so convenient. No. Necessity first compels people to anthropophagy (a dreadful word even to spell), and then Use, or, as it is sometimes called, Second Nature, not only reconciles but endears the practice.

The cause which creates this necessity is almost always famine by shipwreck. It is remarkable that in very rare cases indeed is such a course determined upon except at sea. When cast upon an uninhabited and desert island, the same horrible alternative to starvation does not seem to occur to men as when they form part of a boat's crew. The sea-air, perhaps, creates a more violent and active hunger; or, it is possible that which men shrink from with loathing on their natural home the earth, does not appear so abhorrent and abnormal to them when tossed forlorn in an open boat upon the desolate rainy seas. In the very remarkable narrative of Ensign Prentiss of the 84th Regiment, shipwrecked on the island of Cape Breton in 1780, this difference is strongly exemplified. Himself and his companions endured unheard-of hardships upon that barren spot. Their provisions, scanty enough at first, were lavishly used up in secret by the selfish ship's captain, until nothing was left them but onions (which had formed part of the cargo) and kelp. Prentiss then proposed that they should endeavour to repair their boat, which had 'started' in several places, and coast round the island: these repairs were effected by putting oakum into the cracks and throwing water upon it, which presently congealed in the intense cold. In this frail vessel they actually ventured to embark, although, when it thawed, which happened more than once, the oakum fell out, and the crew were well-nigh swamped. All the food they found in this perilous voyage was but three quarts of cranberries and hips, and a few wild rose-buds, obtained by shovelling away the snow on the shore.

They were not worse off than they had been before, yet they began to look askance at the captain, and reflect how abominably he had behaved in the matter of their provision, and especially how plump it had made him. Then they returned to the spot from

which they had begun their fruitless expedition, and dismissed the horrid thought from their minds. A few tallow-candles, with which the poor wretches flavoured their kelp-weed soup, were still remaining to them, and they eked these out as far as they could. Their clothes were almost entirely burned off from crowding close to their wood-fire, their limbs swollen to a prodigious bulk, and their eyes almost invisible from the effects of this miserable fare, but still the touch of Earth seemed to have re-awakened their natural prejudices against man-eating. No sooner, however, was a second voyage determined upon, and the famished crew embarked, than the mate suggested that casting lots (as though that plan must have occurred to everybody) for who should be sacrificed to save the rest, was in their case unnecessary, for that the captain was clearly the right person to be cooked, not only for the reasons above mentioned, but because he was sinking more rapidly than the others. Death was therefore of less consequence to him, and, moreover, there was no time to lose; a few hours more or less was, to his friends and expectant guests, as they might be called, of the utmost importance: it was not to be supposed that they were going to eat a gentleman who had died a natural death. These considerations, reasonable as they were, did not strike the captain himself with the same force with which they occurred to the crew, and it is doubtful whether a man so essentially selfish as he had proved himself to be, would ever have acknowledged their justice. His companions were, however, released from the disagreeable necessity of enforcing their views by the appearance of a canoe manned by Indian hunters, who conveyed them to their own settlement, where the poor fellows were sumptuously maintained upon smoked venison and train-oil. Captain D—, however, had a very narrow escape, and so also had his men, for he had fallen out with them too much while alive, to give any expectation that he would have agreed with them had the mate's suggestion been carried out.

Mr Matthew Cox, the original projector of the attempt to raise the *Royal George*, sunk at Spithead, experienced the strangest adventures. In 1759, the vessel in which he was voyaging from St Christopher to Jamaica was captured by a French privateer under circumstances of great atrocity. The crew, although they had surrendered, were literally cut to pieces, except one or two, including our narrator, who were put ashore at Aux Cayes, and there imprisoned. From this place, Mr Cox resolved to attempt his escape in concert with the ship's cook, a negro, who had been pressed into the French service. He had managed to procure a barge with six oars, masts, and sails, but no compass. A surgeon and mate of a Guineaman, also prisoners, shared this enterprise. They had bread, cheese, raisins, and water sufficient for fourteen days at short allowance. Passing the guard-house, however, a boy who was carrying these provisions was detained by the sentry, so that they had no stores whatever. They themselves got safe down to the shore at night, however, and lay concealed, while the negro went to buy a pound of bread, which cost three shillings. They then took a small boat and put off with one oar to the barge; when they came alongside her, they found that the masts, sails, and oars had all been taken out, as though on purpose to defeat their scheme of escape. To go back would be to endure lingering tortures, while to proceed was to put to sea in a mere cock-boat, which might well be termed their coffin, with less than nine feet keel. Taking the backboards out of the barge, of which they afterwards made paddles, they put off, and got under the stern of a large Dutchman, whereby a boat sent in pursuit went ahead of them, and by the dashing of its oars, actually afforded them a guide out of the harbour. By four o'clock in the morning, with their one oar and two boards, they had got

eighteen miles. They then ventured in-shore, and hauled their boat up; but the mosquitoes and sandflies were in such swarms that the poor fellows could hardly live—the skin of their heads peeled completely off. Still, out of a small tree they constructed a mast, and from the bark of a maple made ropes and twine. 'As soon as we had completed a stout rope, we launched our boat, and of our shirts made two sails; fortunately, I had two sail-needles in my pocket, which assisted us much; with the bodies, we made a main-sail, and with the sleeves, a foresail; besides, we having each of us a good knife, made our work the easier.' Nothing can exceed the fortitude of these men, or their determination at all hazards not to be retaken. A boat, with eight hands in her, comes in pursuit, and since escape is hopeless, these four cause their little vessel to stand towards her, resolved at least to make the most of their knives. The aspect of them, maddened by despair, is such, that their enemies put about and seek the land with all sail they can make. After this, the elements only molest them. They stick up a knife, the sheath of which they steer by as by the stars at night. One steers, and one keeps bailing out the water they are continually shipping; the other two are obliged to lie at the bottom instead of ballast. On the third day, only half their bread remains, and thirty-two raisins out of a little store Mr Cox had in his pocket. They tie their handkerchiefs around them tightly, that the vacuum which nature abhors may not be so distinctly felt, but the pangs of hunger already gnaw them. However, on the fourth morning they perceive Jamaica only a few miles away, and make a hearty meal upon the remainder of the bread, which has become green, being saturated with the waves. They finish, too, their little stock of fresh water, for what matters, now that land and liberty are in sight. Then, alas, what appeared to be land turns out to be a fog-bank!

'It is impossible for pen to write or tongue to tell our grief at this discovery.' Then the winds and waves arise, and the sails are torn, and have to be made up again out of pocket-handkerchiefs. 'And yet I believe none of us thought of the danger we were in, in so small a boat, with so great a sea.' Death by starvation was the fate they feared; and on the sixth day the three white men determined to kill the negro for their sustenance. Can anything more terrible be conceived than this necessity which set honest and brave men to think of killing their companion, who had served them well and faithfully? The black man, however, who had lived better than the prisoners while on shore, was not to be easily overcome, and being suspicious of their intentions, he contrived to get possession of three out of the four knives, and threw them overboard. Then in their turn they began to be afraid of the negro, and would not permit him to come up among them to steer. Mr Cox had two musket-balls, the chewing of which relieved his excessive thirst a little; one of these he kept always in his mouth, the other he had the misfortune to swallow while asleep. But nothing could keep off hunger. The floating gulf-weed afforded them scarcely any nourishment, and only once did they touch what can be called food. A bird called a noddy, after flying round them several times, and torturing them with apprehensions of its escape, at length settled in Mr Cox's bosom. 'I had hardly patience to kill it, but put its head in my mouth, and kept picking it while I sucked its blood; I then gave it to the doctor to divide, which he performed very justly, each man's share being about three-quarters of an ounce. The head of this bird I sucked for nearly four hours. Surely such a sudden alteration was never known in four human creatures; we considered ourselves as strong now as on the day we set out.' The black cook of course had his share with the others. Fifteen pennyweights of noddy had restored to the rest their natural feelings of generosity